THE PROBLEM OF LABOR

Murat Halstead Takes a Hopeful View.

A GOOD WORD FOR MONOPOLIES.

The Real Relief of the People—Revolutions of Peace and Evolutions of Plenty. Inventions, Finance, Government Ownership and the Supply of Gold.

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There are always many men who believe themselves as well equipped for great careers as any one in the enjoyment of distinction, and they are on the lookout for issues, in the development of which a new crop of statesmen may be evolved, and they mean to furnish the statesmanship and accept the contingent emolument. The success of antislavery men in becoming national leaders and abolishing the evil they warred against has inspired all specialists with uncommon zeal. The Prohibitionists fancied for several years that they had a patent for the greatness that was to belong to those who overthrew the giant evil of intemperance, and there was at once a desire to restrict the laborers and a passion to go into the politics of the reformation and arise as governors and senators, and the display of intolerance was extraordinary as the enthusiasm. We doubt whether the good old temperance cause has been aided in good works by the peculiar flavor imparted to its politics. We have had a series of gentlemen variously educated and inspired, engaged in hand to hand encounters with the money powers, and they have had remedies for all the evils of inequality of fortune and other diversities of existence discoverable in the conditions of our race. Paper money has been much recommended. The destruction of credit is esteemed a specific. The object of the unlimited "coinage" of paper money is to swamp the securities that represent the exchangeable forms of capital. The accumulations of industry are held to be the embarrassments of mankind, and the enemies of the poor are those who have saved earnings and planted them in flourishing situations.

Proposed Panaceas.

The latest freak of progress as it is interpreted by persons who are in the habit of discovering wonders is that there is something in labor that must go into politics and impart a new set of principles for the conduct of the public. Barring faith in flying machines and perpetual motions, there is no surer sign of an erratic understanding than belief that there is something in the commonplace air that is about to produce marvels. The weak are always wondering and have a fixed policy of discovering in trivial things amazing consequences. Quackery in politics is even more offensive than in medicine. There are cure alls for all public woes—the patent medicines of popular maladies. All that is wanted is that some particular sirup shall be given or plaster applied, and all will be well. The names of advanced and gifted citizens who have invented a matchless sanative are applied, and there you are ready for anything incredible.

There is a fashion of assuming that there is about to be a labor party that will do everything for everybody—according to the great Bill of Tittleblat Titmouse—and the less a man knows about his own business the grander he is for the management of public interests. There is a propaganda to the effect that there is only a little time left before there will be revolutions, and there are persons ready to rush to the front and see that everything revolves and no mistakes are made. The wages system, we understand, is to be abolished as a sort of slavery. There is to be a strike that is to become universal. No workingman who is not organized shall have any rights anywhere. The people are to take all the railroads for themselves and run them, and all the telegraphs and telephones also, and there is to be no line of public transportation that is not the property of the public, and all voters are to have free passes. When a walking delegate walks aboard a Pullman car or a steamboat after the revolution, it is his. The people are to own the government, and the government is to take care of the people. The railroads are to be vastly extended, and so also the telegraphs. The farmers are all to have wires run into their kitchens, and every man is to be furnished with a newspaper which is to give him all the official information he wants and tell him just what to do. The whole people are to constitute an official class, and while wages are to be abolished salaries are to be abundant. The government will absorb all functions, and all persons are to do very much according to their pleasure. There is to be a rich monotony of existence. The "cult" of the fashionable madness that the majority of men are wronged and desperate is that there must be an uprising. The republican form of government, we are instructed, is to be abolished as a failure like all the rest. The accustomed vociferation of the anarchists and the labor socialists is that the state of things is so bad that there must be awful agitations—cyclones, tidal waves, earthquakes, floods and fires. The first law is not to be order, but anarchy.

Let us pause and inquire, What is the matter with things? Is it permitted to doubt that the conditions of humanity are altogether deplorable to desperation? Is it allowable to imagine that there is not anything stunning about to occur anywhere? May we ask where is the fire that makes the smoke? Could or should one survive the fancy that centuries will come and go without cracking the shell of the earth? It would not do, of course, to venture the opinion that labor is not so badly off as has been alleged, provided work is not abandoned. We mean other work than that of agitation. There is, however, a good deal yet to do beside diverting labor into politics as a trade occupation and profession. Persons may be found capable of believing that people can live several years without the confiscation of railroad corporations. The grievances of labor that are so constantly mentioned might be rendered more intelligible if they were formulated by men familiar with more than one workbench. Before practical politicians leave the old roads they want to know where the new ones are known to lead. Have we not been studying astronomy too much and geography too little? Labor should be practical if politics becomes its leading industry.

Elevating Influences.

We propose to examine the potential influences that are changing the face of the earth to show that the modern inventions and improvements, the very monopolies against which there is such incessant accusations, are all working together to relieve labor from the burdens that are real, and to not merely alleviate the sufferings of the people in humble circumstances, but elevate the masses by appropriating to them more and more of the good things upon the whole and speedily abolishing the irritating asperities of the labor questions and establishing peace and good will among men.

Among the monopolies that are complained of by the representatives of labor who engage in the work of alleged public instruction and the procurement of legislation is the telegraph, and it is the social labor theory that one of the first steps to be taken is to annex the telegraph to the postoffice, as is done in England. In this country that experiment would be almost as costly as a war, but it is not the cost that radical statesmanship counts. Associated very closely with the telegraph is the press—the "capitalistic press," if you please—and behind the press are certain monopolies of presses and of material and machinery for paper making, and modern transportation reaching all continents and islands has supplied to the latest appliances a vast amount and variety of woods and grasses that are fibrous, and paper has become through the combination and competition of monopolies excellent and cheap. The result is the daily newspaper at a very low rate, and it contains the news of the world. One cent a day will place the workingman on an equality with the capitalist in the current history of mankind. There are no important secrets from the press. Rich and poor alike share in the universal and simultaneous diffusion of the knowledge that is justice and power, the new material of wealth and fame. This should not be regarded as a trivial or frivolous matter because it is so common that it is accepted like the health that is in wholesome air and water.

Labor and Railroads.

The crusades of labor, when its organizations become contentious, are usually directed against the railroads. The great strikes are aimed at lines of transportation. The Coxey armies thought they had rights or ought to have them to be rolled across the continent when on political business free. There has been a strike to check the production of coal, a strike to direct the principles upon which cars should be constructed, strikes to prevent the transit of food from the grainfields and cattle plains and the gardens and orchards to the cities, and the word "railroad" has for millions become synonymous with monopoly and with oppression. It is a great part of the social labor doctrine that the roads for steam locomotion should be the property of the people, that labor and not capital should possess and occupy and operate the railroads, state and interstate and transcontinental. The first reflection under this head is that capital is better able than labor to bear the losses that have befallen railroads within a few years. The nation would have been bankrupt if it had owned the roads ten years ago. It is one of the lines of policy laid down by populistic and communistic publicists that the state should build roads to prevent the exactions of monopolies. There are four lines of railroad connecting Kansas City and Denver and but three between Liverpool and London. It is in Kansas, however, the scene of a great portion of this excess, that there has been the loudest and sharpest demand for the duplication of roads. Next to railroad monopoly the most bitter and systematic hostilities to combinations and aggregations of capital are meant for land monopolies, and we have all sorts of remedial righteousness placed at our service from no tax at all on land to a single exclusive land tax, and we can take our choice, for it is all the same anyhow. It is a dreadful thing to own land—why, land should be as free as air, we are told—no workingman should be allowed to toil enough hours a day to become the proprietor of an acre, for if he does he will become an oppressor and tyrant to gather and multiply the unearned increments. We may, however, possibly ascertain something by putting the railroad monopolies and land monopolies together in our meditations, as they are in our experiences, and see what their relations become and how the popular interests are affected by the largest monopoly developments.

The railroads across the continent have brought to New York, and that signifies that they have introduced to the markets of the world, the vast wheat areas of the northwest and the cattle ranges of the southwest, and other roads and steamer lines have thrown the beef and cotton and butter of Australia and the wheat of Argentina into the London market to meet all the farmers of this boundless continent there, and therefore the resources of the earth are this very year spread before the working people who densely inhabit the older countries as never before in all the stories of the ages. Are the workingmen opposed to cheap food? Could they have done for themselves what monopoly has done for them in opening new wheatfields and cattle pastures? Is it nothing that they have wheat and beef at rates that they never could have been produced by old England or New England? Are not the farmers of Germany complaining that their food products are so low their land is not worth what it was once, and do they not call upon the emperor to give his help to land monopoly? Are there not like outcries heard in France, in England and in the older states of the United States? Is it a misfortune that the best food the earth yields has been cheapened so that it goes to the tables of the workingmen? Is there no progress that the poor have wheat instead of rye to eat? Is it, counting the human race by the ten millions and time by ten year periods, calamitous that the railroads have diffused the value of the land of Germany, England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois and bestowed that value upon Asia and South America, Texas and Dakota, Nevada and Nebraska? Has not the railroad done far more for the amelioration of land monopoly than all the philosophers and professional reformers since the dawn of civilization?

As the telegraph, and the press, and the paper maker, and the machinist have together given the poor man equality with the rich man in the news of the day, giving him as the sun rises and sets the running record of the hemispheres in the practical intelligence that possesses the broadest utilities, even so the railroads have sown broadcast to the ends of the earth the old golden land monopolies, and the "long haul transportation," that has been accused as one of the most acute grievances of the multitudes of men, has placed wheaten bread and roast beef and butter and mutton within the reach of the humblest workers.

Benefits of Corporations.

What the steam roads and boats have done in the diffusion of the values of farm lands the electric roads are doing for the metropolitan districts. The trolley has conquered all cities of importance, with the exception of New York, on this continent, and in spite of the slaughter of the innocents in the streets of Brooklyn and the disastrous strike, that was most untimely, improvident and profligate, the unwisdom of speculation and the embarrassments that follow financiering too fine spun and imaginary wealth too expansive, Brooklyn has a better system of rapid transit than New York will have if she spends $50,000,000 twice in tunneling rocks and swamps and meddling with the foundations of structures 800 feet high is a mad raid to destroy the elevated railroad monopoly. The smaller towns are being wired together and united by wire still closer than by rail with the greater towns, and the tendency that will be first marked and studied in this enormous evolution is that of making the population more homogeneous. The city and country are to become so intermingled as to be indistinguishable. The trolley lessens the cost in time and money of transportation, gives the workingman more room—that is, increases the distance he can afford to have his home away from his shop—takes him out of the tenement house and finds him a chance to keep a cow and to till a garden and rejoice in a few fruit trees. All this is not quite done, but it is surely under way. The trolley outspreads cities, and we shall travel as well as write by wire over the length and breadth of the land. This estimate does not imply that the administration of the trolley has not had most serious faults. Give the gravest consideration to all objections to one of the most marvelous modern improvements, and the trolley remains the friend of the poor man. It gives land to the landless, because it permits the workingman to ride farther and pay less fare than on other conveyances. He can go into the country to sleep and eat, and his family will have more health and hope and happiness. This is not the road to ruin, but the path of progress, peace and plenty. It is not on this line that the precipice and the bloody abyss of revolution await us. The gulf of despair must be sought in the territorial possessions of some other monopoly. The next thing the transmission of power by wire will allow the location of manufactories in places heretofore inaccessible, and there will be a broader spread of land value, and the sanitary conditions and moral surroundings of the people who earn their living in the shops will be extraordinarily enhanced. Out of the improved situations the force that traverses the wires creates will emanate untold influences, all advantageous, not driving to anarchism, but establishing conservative reserves, strengthening the cause of good government, because manifesting in the general welfare that the rights of the people are not immaterial and assert themselves in incessant victories of peace, and that order and prosperity, patriotism and justice, truth and thrift, the hand and brain and heart and pocket are altogether for human progress, that the modern improvements, the spectral monopolies, the corporate enterprises, the capitalist combinations, work for and not against the workingman, whose position overruling all errors improves with the procession of the seasons and is advanced and elevated with the passing years.

The Money Question.

The bitterest of the dissatisfaction and the most serious of the illusions of millions of the people, who have indulged imagination in the creation of phantoms of oppression and conjured up fantastic theories of impossible tyranny, concerns "money," and particularly the standards of money. The importance of the standard of money regards the obligations that are undertaken. If we were all out of debt, we could make choice of the material of the new standard without prejudice, and it might be gold, silver, copper or iron, without harming any one. But we are not about to take a new departure and must consider the situation as it stands. Many citizens believe that silver is the true and honest and gold a false and dishonest measure of values; that there have been enormous losses to mankind in the depreciation of silver and the alleged appreciation of gold. They say, measured by cotton and by wheat, silver is the fair standard. A comparison of wages with gold will, however, show that gold has appreciated but slightly, if at all.

During the 33 years the gold standard has been, as Webster said of our flag, "full-high advanced." There have been two sides to the gold and silver questions. There are gold and there are silver monometallists. As the world has been plowed and sown and harrowed and reaped the fair for all standard is bimetallic. We pass from that proposition hurriedly, for it is debatable. It has been held that gold was not subject to fluctuations, but that is a mistake. Silver has been overproduced, and it has been necessary to limit its coinage to preserve the parity of the two metals. Let that go also as touching and clinging to controversy. The upholders of the gold standard have cried continually that gold alone was money, and they have not told the truth, but they have turned the tide of fortune against themselves. The rush of nation after nation for gold, the increasing demand at all the money centers for that metal, as if it was heaven's own best gift, has caused the whole earth to be searched for the precious yellow metal, and the drills have found it in the deserts and the mountains, and cheap transportation added to modern machines hastens it into circulation. There is the quartz mill and the improved chemistry that grinds the rocks and collects the particles. Gold mining has become as certain as coal mining. There was more gold found in 1893 than ever before. The output was increased in 1894, and it will this year far surpass all records.

From all quarters of the globe comes the news of gold finds. The mines of Russia, once second only to our own, show augmented returns, the same story comes from California, from British Columbia, from Alaska, from British Guiana and from Terra del Fuego, from Mexico and Peru, the old marvelous mines yielding anew to modern science, skill and mechanical facility; above all from South Africa, where there is a supply, in touch of the drill if not in sight, that will unquestionably amount to billions, and in Colorado it appears that, deeper than the silver mines, are gold mines that promise to outstrip not only the present, but the past of California and to compete with the unparalleled stratified mines of South Africa and perhaps maintain for the United States pre-eminence in yield of the precious metal, though the extraordinary competition in output of gold, like all other things in this happily constituted world, is increased in production to the attraction of the demand. That is the key to the situation. The period of prosperity that the civilized nations enjoyed according to their enlightenment and energy after discoveries of gold in California and Australia is well remembered. There was a golden boom in all the great nations. Another period of generous advancement and increase, based upon abundant gold—and that there is an abundance of it is a fact that every money market attests and the daily news confirms—has dawned, and before the close of this century, that has but a little over one presidential term to run, it will be upon us in full splendor, and the maintenance of the standard of gold supported by restored silver, the white metal regaining its old place by the easy operation of natural laws, will be the policy of the poor and the happy vindication of the inviolatability of contracts and of the solid profits to all who do their share of the world's work.

MURAT HALSTEAD.

SPEND THEIR MONEY.

PUBLIC SPIRITED CITIZENS OF VALDOSTA, GA.

Railroads and Manufactories Built and Owned by Home Capital—Friendly Rivalry In Beautiful Homes—Secret of the Success of a Southern Town.

To any one visiting this section just now Valdosta will be a surprise, writes a correspondent of the Atlanta Constitution. The surprise will be in the nature of new brick blocks, of expensive houses in course of erection on all sides, of prosperous manufacturing enterprises and of genuine railroad buildings.

In company with Colonel Charles Pendleton I had an opportunity of looking into these evidences of progress. The sound of the hammer and the saw does not remind one so much of improvement in an old city as it does of the building of a new city, such as has been seen in the west.

This development of building is only to be explained by the fact that our people have been saving their money until the banks were overflowing with deposits. First one citizen determined to build a modern style home, and then his neighbor resolved not to be outdone, and he, too, studied out plans, and the result is that as you stand upon any of the eminences around and look over the city you will see the new frames dotting the view on all sides.

We have three banks of excellent standing, all paying 8 per cent dividends and having deposit accounts probably equal to their stock. This shows that the cash is in the county. There is, in addition to these, an investment company, with a capital stock of $50,000, upon which 8 per cent interest is paid. Our mill men have more orders than they can fill for building material, a state of things you will not often meet with. Among our new enterprises is a guano factory, with a plant of $100,000, every cent of which was furnished by three residents of Valdosta. While railroad men estimate that the guano trade in Georgia and South Carolina has fallen off 66 per cent, yet our factory has disposed of every pound of its product.

During the past year we have been building more houses of first class style than any other city in the state, not even excepting Atlanta. We have erected a sawmill, planing mill, guano factory, ice factory and other establishments with our own capital exclusively. Our farmers have gone into cattle and hog raising on a large scale, the industry having doubled in the last ten years. Valdosta is the heaviest Sea Island center in the world, our annual receipts running up to 10,000 bales. The people in the country are well off—not quite out of debt, but doing well, and living better than they ever have before. The enterprises already started are to be followed by others, such as a carriage and buggy factory. Remember this point, that all these enterprises are built with Valdosta money, free from mortgage or other entanglement.

Now I'm coming to the point based upon what I have already told you. We have determined that a city thus situated, with such wealth, such enterprise and such public spirit, shall not be bottled in by either one or two roads. We propose not only to build new railroads to accessible points, but to build them with our own money and to own them right here, so that the big systems around us cannot gobble them up.

We have already started one road—15 miles of which are finished, to Madison, in Florida—a distance of 30 miles, to be known as the Valdosta Southern. The probability is that this road will be farther extended down the coast to Tampa, opening up to Valdosta the trade of a rich section of country. The next road that we have in view is one almost straight east to Fernandina, to be known as the Fernandina and Western. Fernandina has recently been shut out by the railroads and seeks an outlet. The distance is 100 miles. The people of Fernandina have already completed arrangements for the building of 50 miles, and Valdosta will take up the other 50. The country between Valdosta and Fernandina abounds in the richest forests of timber in the world. The road will cost about $4,000 a mile for construction. Two other roads are projected, one on an air line to Albany, and the other in a northeasterly direction. All of these ventures are to be controlled at home, and under no circumstances will be allowed to pass into the hands of adverse parties.

Metropolis of the Pacific.

San Francisco is on the broad highway of success now. We have been distanced in the race heretofore simply because we would not take the trouble to bestir ourselves. We have lost our northern and southern trade because we did not have energy enough to keep it. We are awake now, and we shall get back all we have lost. There is a brilliant future in store for Victoria, Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, Los Angeles and San Diego, but there is room for only one New York on the Pacific coast, and its name is San Francisco.—San Francisco Call.

Where Women Can't Hold Office.

At the recent municipal election at Florence, Or., an entire woman's ticket was elected. As soon as the result was known a question of the constitutionality of the election came up, and it was decided that women could not hold office "except by courtesy." The matter was left to the old city council. It has decided against the women. The council will appoint men in their places. One of the features of the election was the candidacy of a wife against her husband and the defeat of the latter.

They Get the Money.

Advertisers get the cash trade. When a man wants to beat a merchant, he will take the miserly fellow around the corner who thought advertising a luxury.

BUSINESS MEN WANTED.

Congress Should Have More Representatives of Toil and Industry.

Any business man who attempts to run his business as congress runs the affairs of the United States will very speedily find himself an utterly hopeless bankrupt, without credit and without the means of getting it.

Politicians and statesmen as a general rule are not business men or versed in business affairs. We need good lawyers, but not those who are notorious for a mere preponderance of language that is exceeded in quantity only by that of the professional politician. The result is not conducive to the best business interests of the country.

If we are to judge from the disgraceful and dilatory tactics of the New York state legislature, a lack of legislative business wisdom is not confined to congress. State and national affairs need as much careful attention as is given to the management of a prosperous business. There should be due consideration and discussion upon important and weighty topics, but there is no occasion to waste valuable time and money in useless discussions or wind bag oratory. Such is of no earthly use. It convinces nobody; it changes no votes.

Upon important national events the minds of statesmen are agreed either for or against the best interests of the country. Why not, then, at once get down to the actual business in hand instead of waiting weeks or months, wasting the money of the people and the time of their representatives, who would often serve the country far better by remaining at home?

The representatives of the Fifty-fourth congress have already been elected. We are not aware exactly how many business men there are among its members, but we do hope that there are many who will endeavor to impress upon their fellow legislators the desirability, the necessity, of strict attention to business, of prompt legislation and of prompt adjournment. Let us see for once if it be not possible to have a businesslike congress.

PROTECTION.

FREE TRADE.

The Experience In Trade.

There are some poor lathes made in America, as we all know, and undoubtedly some of them are sent to other countries, where they discredit American lathe builders, for unfortunately business activity and push are not always combined with the mechanical ability and good judgment required to build a good lathe. On the other hand, good lathes—lathes well adapted to the service required of them—are built in England, France, Germany and other countries, but we have the word of more than one English bred mechanic to the effect that the best English lathes do not compare well with the best American ones, and we think this opinion is based rather upon conviction in the face of facts of experience than upon prejudice against the lathes of their own country or in favor of ours.—American Machinist.

Tariff the Leading Issue.

A Chicago newspaper, in quest of more light on the political situation, recently sent letters to leading representatives of both parties inquiring if in their opinion President Cleveland was a candidate for a third term on the gold standard platform. The responses, a telegram says, "show that the tariff is still the leading issue, and that no man who has declared himself against protection and whose administration has been arrayed against it can secure the support of the Republicans of the country." This is as might be expected. In the full tide of success Republicans will keep protection inscribed on their banner as prominently as they did in their hour of temporary disaster.

Still More Tin Plate.

The imports of tin plate are not falling off any. In March we received 55,074,575 pounds as against 40,968,992 an increase of nearly 15,000,000 pounds in a single month. This is not so surprising when we remember that the American railroads carry the foreign tin plate cheaper than they will carry American tin plate.

Tin Plate Reform.

During the six months of the new tariff the imports of tin plate at New York were 20,250,000 pounds larger than in the corresponding six months a year earlier.